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ABSTRACT

Noting that partners enter into stepfamily relationships with expectations more appropriate to biological families, this book examines the unique and complex dynamics of remarried families. Drawing on interviews with over 100 stepfamily members, current research, a solid theoretical framework, and a clinical sensibility, the book presents a model of stepfamily development--the Stepfamily Cycle--and details the stages and challenges of forming a cohesive family unit. Four full-length case studies illustrate the varied paths through the Stepfamily Cycle to successful remarried life. Following an introduction highlighting the need for a "developmental map" to stepfamily development, the chapters of the book are: (1) Stepfamily Structure: Bonds without Blood"; (2) The Early Stages: Getting Started without Getting Stuck"; (3) "The Middle Stages: Restructuring the Family; (4) "The Later Stages: Solidifying the Stepfamily"; (5) "Patterns of Development: Four Paths to Resolution"; and (6) "Problems in Stepfamily Development: Intervention. An epilogue discusses what can be learned from stepfamily dynamics. Four appendices present a Stepfamily Cycle summary, self-help guide for stepfamilies, a summary of clinical intervention strategies, and profiles of the families referred to in the book. (HTH)

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